

The Pig Picker: A Barbecue Cocktail

John Shelton Reed

Author, *Barbecue: A Savor the South Cookbook*

We North Carolinians love our vinegar-based barbecue sauces. In fact, we love them so much we don't just splash them on barbecue: East of Raleigh we boil potatoes in sauce-spiked water; west of Raleigh sauce goes in slaw. So why not a cocktail with sauce in it?

Well, you got it. Susannah Brinkley, a graphic designer in Charlotte, asked Amanda Fisher and Paul Bright, compilers of [The Great NC BBQ Map](#), to come up with one for her Feast+West food blog, and Amanda and Paul delivered, with the [Southern Islander Shrub](#). Shrubs, if you didn't know (I didn't), are drinks made with vinegar, sugar, and fruit; this one uses Eastern-style barbecue sauce, honey, and pineapple juice (that's the "Islander" part). Continuing the barbecue theme, the drink is served in a glass rimmed with smoked sea salt.

Amanda and Paul's recipe is really good (try it), but my wife and [co-author](#) Dale doesn't much like pineapple juice, so I started fooling around with alternatives and came up with one that substitutes peach nectar and uses cane sugar syrup instead of honey. Peaches and cane sugar make this drink even more Southern, don't you think?

I call the drink a **Pig Picker**. Here's how to make it.

For cocktail:

- 1½ ounces bourbon
- 1 teaspoon 2:1 cane sugar syrup (below)
- 1 teaspoon peach nectar (below)
- 1 teaspoon Eastern- or Piedmont-style barbecue sauce (below)

For rim:

- 2:1 cane sugar syrup
- Hickory smoked sea salt (below)

Drizzle the syrup onto one half of a plate and pile some salt on the other half. Rotate the rim of an old-fashioned glass in the syrup, then in the salt. Add the four cocktail ingredients to the glass and stir. Add a large cube of ice and drink, "To the liberation of our country!"

Some notes on the ingredients:

2:1 cane sugar syrup

Cane sugar is widely available (at Trader Joe's, for instance, or on-line), but if you can't find it, use light brown sugar instead.

2 parts cane sugar

1 part water

Bring the water to a boil. Add the sugar and return to the boil, stirring. When the sugar has dissolved completely, remove from heat and let cool.

Peach nectar

You can buy peach nectar, often in grocery stores' Mexican food section, but home-made is better:

4 cups peeled, sliced peaches (fresh or frozen)

4 cups water

½ cup sugar (or to taste)

1 Tablespoon lemon juice

Bring the peaches and the water to a boil, and boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Blend in batches, then add sugar and lemon juice and stir well. This freezes well for future use.

Barbecue sauce

I'm not taking sides in the Eastern-Piedmont battle, but I do think the cayenne punch of Eastern-style works better here.

1 pint cider vinegar

5 teaspoons crushed red pepper

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 Tablespoons brown sugar

Mix the ingredients and let stand at least 4 hours.

Hickory smoked sea salt

You can buy this or smoke your own or, for this purpose (don't tell anyone I told you this), you can add a couple of drops of "liquid smoke" to a half-cup or so of sea salt in a sealed container, shake it, and let it stand for a while. And it doesn't really have to be sea salt, either.